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II. — *Greek Ideas as to the Effect of Burial on the Future of the Soul.*

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IF the familiar modern authorities on classical antiquities are to be believed, it was an article of old Greek faith that the souls of the unburied dead were shut out from the place of final rest. But although these authorities generally formulate the doctrine without qualification, their formulas exhibit not altogether trivial differences. Some limit themselves to the statement above given. Thus Teuffel writes in Pauly's *Real-Encyclopädie* s. v. *Inferi*: "Die Seele kann nicht in die Unterwelt, so lange der Leib noch physisch vorhanden, d. h. nicht bestattet ist." Similarly Schömann, in his *Griechische Alterthümer*, ii. p. 565: "Die Seele des Verstorbenen fand keine Stätte im Reich der Todten, so lange der Leib nicht bestattet war." De Coulanges would seem to go farther, and commit himself to the more definite view that the neglected soul was thought of as remaining on earth among living men. He says (*Ancient City*, p. 18): "In order that the soul might be confined to this subterranean abode, . . . it was necessary that the body to which it remained attached should be covered with earth. The soul that had no tomb . . . must wander forever under the form of a *larva* or phantom." Finally, a more prevalent form of this general idea is expressed by E. B. Tylor (*Primitive Culture*, ii. p. 28) in these words: "In classic antiquity . . . it was the most sacred of duties to give the body its funeral rites, that the shade should not flit moaning near the gates of Hades, nor wander in the dismal crowd along the banks of Acheron."

That there is truth in all the foregoing quotations is not denied; but it is the object of the present paper to show that Greek belief on this subject was far less positive and self-consistent than is usually represented. Ideas about the future

life are, in fact, among all peoples, hazy and self-contradictory. Not only do different persons think differently, but, with the rarest exceptions, no one person maintains in his own mind a vivid, detailed, and persistent picture of that life. Casual allusions to it are made with a minimum of realization of their meaning; and even circumstantial statements about it cannot be interpreted like a man's testimony about the town he lives in. Bearing this in mind, we may proceed to consider the occasional appearance in Greek literature of the idea that the souls of the unburied dead were not admitted to Hades.

The subject will be best approached by considering for a moment the genesis of the idea of soul. The earliest conception of a soul is that of an attenuated duplicate of the body, capable of detachment from the body, yet generally resident in it. Probably this conception is generated by cases of apparent detachment, — cases, in other words, of dreams and apparitions; yet, when this dualism is once firmly established, the union of soul and body seems to savage reflection to be in general intimate and persistent. As a rule, the body, so long as present to the eyes and the thoughts, is inhabited by the soul; only now and then does the soul leave its tenement and wander abroad. The association of ideas between body and soul is consequently so powerful that the sight of even a corpse — yes, of even a heap of human bones — calls up the idea of the soul by which the body was tenanted during lifetime. If there are few persons even among the most enlightened races who are entirely emancipated from this association of ideas, among races in the lower stages of culture it is irresistible. But with uncultured man, imagining is believing. When, then, a dead body, instead of being put out of sight and out of mind, remains where human eyes may see it, the notion that the spirit is somehow present too is likely to spring up. Evidence of the wide diffusion of this notion may be seen in Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, ii. pp. 27 f.; and that its origin is what has just been suggested can hardly be doubted by any one who accepts the general theory of Animism advanced in that work. True, the importance which comes to be attached to the ceremonial accompaniments of burial may

lead men to think and speak as if it were the deprivation of these which keeps the ghost from its proper destination ; yet the true source of the superstition is betrayed by the fact that the ghost continues to be regarded as occupying its former body or haunting the immediate neighborhood. This is, at any rate, the form in which the idea of exclusion from Hades most often meets us among the Greeks. It may be seen in the words with which Teiresias rebukes Kreon in the *Antigone* (1070 f.) :

ἔχεις δὲ τῶν κάτωθεν ἐνθάδ' αὖ θεῶν
ἄμοιρον ἀκτέριστον ἀνόσιον νέκυν,

where, in the word *νέκυν*, the notions of soul and body seem confusedly blended. Some ghost stories of later date — as one told by Pliny (*Ep.* vii. 27), of which the scene is at Athens, and one by Lucian (*Philopseudes* 31) — illustrate the same belief. From this it is but a step to the vaguer language of Euripides (*Troades* 1081 ff.) :

ὦ φίλος ὦ πόσι μοι,
σὺ μὲν φθίμενος ἀλαίνεις
ἄθαρτος ἀνδρος.

And this passage may serve as a transition to another form of the doctrine under examination.

In *Hom. Ψ* 71 ff., the spirit of the unburied Patroklos says to Achilles :

θάπτε με ὅτι τάχιστα, πύλας Ἀΐδαο περήσω.
τῆλέ μ' ἔεργουσι ψυχαί, εἰδῶλα καμόντων,
οὐδέ μέ πω μίσγεσθαι ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο ἔωσιν,
ἀλλ' αὐτως ἀλάλῃμαι ἀν' εὐρυπυλὲς Ἀΐδος δῶ.

The topography implied here is highly indistinct, for Patroklos in one breath represents himself as without and within the gates of Hades. Still, in spite of haziness of detail, the main thought is plain : Patroklos is kept on the confines of the underworld. Now this is *prima facie* a different idea from the one previously illustrated. Haunting the neighborhood of the unburied body is not quite the same thing as wandering on the margin of the underworld ; though no doubt, if a Greek had had the discrepancy brought to his attention, he

could have explained it away. Moreover, I believe that the former idea is earlier in time, in spite of its appearing later in Greek literature. It is wholly unsafe to assume without question, as is so often done, that beliefs and customs which meet us first in post-Homeric authors are of post-Homeric origin. Such an assumption must be tested by a wide survey of the development of human thought and institutions. Now the fancy expressed in Hom. Ψ , regarded as the initial form of the exclusion-idea, finds no very plausible explanation in primitive ways of thinking; whereas it is easy to see how it might have been developed as an offshoot from the simple natural notion that the unburied walk the earth, coupled with the belief in Hades as the proper home of the dead. Be that as it may, it is noteworthy that the idea of Hom. Ψ does not reappear in classical Greek literature, unless it be in Hom. λ . Here, after telling how Odysseus, having reached the appointed spot on the edge of Hades, dug a trench, and filled it with the blood which was to reanimate for a time the νεκύων ἀμεννυὰ κάρηνα, the poem proceeds (51 ff.):

πρώτη δὲ ψυχὴ Ἑλπήνορος ἦλθεν ἑταίρου·
οὐ γάρ πω ἐτέθαπτο ὑπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης·
σῶμα γάρ ἐν Κίρκης μεγάρῳ κατελείπομεν ἡμεῖς·
ἄκλαντον καὶ ἄθαρτον, ἐπεὶ πόνος ἄλλος ἔπειγεν.

The commentators, ancient and modern,¹ say in substance: "Elpenor appeared first, because, his corpse having remained unburied, he could not go down δόμον Ἀΐδος εἶσω." (Merry.) But, in spite of this unanimity, I venture to doubt whether the poet had any such thought in mind. If one reads the whole episode through without prejudice, he will be struck by the absence of any explicit reference to Elpenor's being excluded from the society of the other shades. Even the suppliant himself, in his entreaty to Odysseus for burial, hints at nothing of the sort. And if his being the first to have speech with Odysseus must be accounted for, his own

¹ Faesi is apparently an exception. See his note on Ψ 72 (edition of 1865). Ameis and Koch, in their notes on ω 187, virtually unsay what they have said on λ 51.

eagerness to be heard would furnish a plausible enough reason. True, this ghost, unlike the rest, seems able to hold converse without drinking of the dark blood; and for this there is the old explanation that, not being yet admitted to the interior of Hades, he has not yet tasted of the water of Lethe. But, not to dwell on the fact that Homer appears to know nothing of Lethe, this explanation seems to me a case of treating "literature" like "dogma,"—an unwarrantable attempt to make a poetical picture square with a supposed doctrinal formula. The inconsistency is best left as the poem leaves it, unexplained; especially as the whole passage (lines 51–83) is open to strong suspicion of being interpolated. The idea, then, embodied in Hom. Ψ , that the soul of an unburied corpse is doomed to wander on the hither margin of the underworld, seems more like the fancy of an individual poet than an article of popular faith. The popularity of the Homeric poems must of course have made this fancy familiar to the Greek world, and Vergil elaborates it in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*; but if we may judge by the silence of post-Homeric Greek authors, it struck no deep root in the Greek mind, while at the most it was crowded and overshadowed by other conflicting ideas.

For it is now time to point out that entrance into Hades was commonly thought of as taking place at the moment of death, and that whether burial was to follow or not. The wide-spread belief in a subterranean realm of shades probably grows out of the custom of burial. "Hell," as M. Guyau puts it, "is nothing but an extended tomb." (*Morale d'Épicure*, p. 106.) But the Greeks, at the stage where we first meet them, were no longer distinctly conscious of this. Hades had come to be the proper home of all disembodied spirits: to it the spirit took its flight when life expired. Thus, to take a typical instance, we read (*A* 262 f.):

ἐνθ' Ἀντήνορος νῆες ὑπ' Ἀτρεΐδῃ βασιλῆι
πῶτμον ἀναπλήσαντες ἔδυν δόμον Ἀΐδος εἴσω.

More striking are the cases where the descent to Hades is mentioned in immediate connection with the fact of non-burial. Thus Achilles (*X* 344 ff.) refuses to the dying

Hector the rites of burial ; but immediately after we read (361 f.) :

ὥς ἄρα μιν εἰπόντα τέλος θανάτοιο κάλυψεν,
ψυχὴ δ' ἐκ ρεθέων πταμένη "Αἰδώςδε βεβήκει.

See also *H* 327 ff., and the familiar lines which begin the *Iliad*. But passages like these, though inconsistent with the notion of the soul's lingering in or near the unburied body, are reconcilable, it may be urged, with the language of Patroklos in *Ψ*. It is admitted that, standing by themselves, they would not prove much. But then they do not stand by themselves. The twenty-fourth book of the *Odyssey* is more circumstantial, and treats the presence of unburied men in Hades as a matter of course. Here the shades of the suitors are conducted by Hermes to the lower world. Their destination is left in no manner of doubt (11 ff.) :

παρ δ' ἴσαν Ὀκεανοῦ τε ῥοὰς καὶ Λευκάδα πέτρην,
ἥδὲ παρ' Ἡελίοιο πύλας καὶ δῆμον Ὀνείρων
ἦισαν· αἶψα δ' ἵκοντο κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα,
ἔνθα τε ναίουσι ψυχαί, εἰδῶλα καμόντων.
εὕρον δὲ ψυχὴν Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλλῆος
καὶ Πατροκλῆος, κ. τ. λ.

And when one of their number has told to Agamemnon the story of their slaughter, he ends by saying (186 ff.) :

ὥς ἡμεῖς, Ἀγάμεμνον, ἀπωλόμεθ', ὧν ἔτι καὶ νῦν
σώματ' ἀκηδέα κείται ἐνὶ μεγάροις Ὀδυσῆος·
οὐ γάρ πω ἴσασι φίλοι κατὰ δώμαθ' ἐκάστου,
οἳ κ' ἀπονίψαντες μέλανα βρότον ἐξ ὠτειλέων
καθθέμενοι γοοοῖεν· ὃ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων.

Post-Homeric literature supplies illustrations of the same way of thinking.

κείται δὲ νεκρὸς περὶ νεκρῶ, τὰ νυμφικὰ
τέλη λαχὼν δειλῆος ἐν γ' "Αἰδου δόμοις,

says the messenger in the *Antigone* (1240 f.), while the bodies of Haemon and Antigone still lie where they had just fallen. Alkestis, in Euripides's drama, when about to die, sees Charon and Pluto waiting impatient (252 ff.) :

ὁρῶ δίκωπον ὁρῶ σκάφος,
νεκύων δὲ πορθμεύς

ἔχων χέρ' ἐπὶ κοιτῷ Χάρων μ' ἦδη καλεῖ· τί μέλλεις;
ἐπείγου· σὺ κατέργεις.

ἄγει μ' ἄγει μέ τις, οὐχ ὄρας;
νεκίων ἐς αὐτὰν

ὑπ' ὀφρύσι κυανανέσι βλέπων πτερωτὸς Ἄιδας.

Later, after her death, but before her burial, the chorus sing (435 ff.):

ὦ Πελίου θύγατερ,
χαίρουσά μοι εἰν Ἄϊδα δόμοισιν
τὸν ἀνάλιον οἶκον οἰκετεύοις.
ἴστω δ' Ἄϊδας ὁ μελαγχαίτας θεὸς ὅς τ' ἐπὶ κόπῃ
πηδάλῳ τε γέρων
νεκροπομπὸς ἵζει,
πολὺν δὴ πολὺν δὴ γυναῖκ' ἀρίσταν
λίμναν Ἀχεροντίαν πορεύ-
σας ἐλάτῃ δικώπῳ,

where the second sentence seems most naturally to imply that the passage in Charon's ferry-boat has already taken place. Again, Lucian suggests (*De Luctu*, 16) that, while a father is engaged in frantic funeral laments over the body of his son, the son might get leave of Aeakos and Pluto to slip out from his nether prison and remonstrate against this ill-judged grief. The soul, then, according to this, is already established in Hades before the funeral rites are performed. Still more to the present purpose is the story told in a scholium on Pindar, *Ol. i.* 97. According to this authority, Sisyphus, being near death, gave orders to his wife to leave him unburied. She obeyed; but he, descending to Pluto, accused his wife of neglect, and obtained permission to revisit the earth and punish her.

The evidence quoted in the two foregoing pages shows, not only that the Greeks were in the habit of speaking conventionally and thoughtlessly of the soul as departing to Hades immediately after death, but that this idea might be dwelt upon and developed into a picture or story, which, for the time being at least, seemed real. There is surely just as much reason, and just as little, for extracting from the twenty-fourth book of the *Odyssey* as from the twenty-third book of the *Iliad* a dogma, and representing it as *the* belief of the

Greeks. To complete our picture of the Greek state of mind on the matter, it remains only to show how easily and unconsciously the transition could be made by one and the same mind from one of the main ideas above considered to another contradictory one. Thus, although in Hom. *Ψ* the soul of the unburied Patroklos is repeatedly spoken of as in or on the confines of Hades, yet Achilles in the funeral procession "was conducting a blameless comrade to the house of Hades" (137). A much more striking and instructive example of the confusion and self-contradiction possible on the subject is afforded by the prologue of the *Hecuba* of Euripides. Here Polydoros begins by announcing:

ἦκω νεκρῶν κευθμῶνα καὶ σκότου πύλας
 λιπὼν, ὡς "Αἰδὼς χωρὶς ᾤκισται θεῶν.

But a few lines later, after telling how he had been killed and thrown into the sea, he says (28 ff.):

κεῖμαι δ' ἐπ' ἀκταῖς, ἄλλοτ' ἐν πόντου σάλπ
 πολλοῖς διαύλοις κυμάτων φορούμενος,
 ἄκλαντος ἄταφος· νῦν δ' ὑπὲρ μητρὸς φίλης
 Ἑκάβης αἰσσω, σῶμ' ἐρημώσας ἐμόν.

Here, then, in the space of thirty lines, are two inconsistent statements. Being a spirit, Polydoros belongs, as a matter of course, in Hades; but when the attention of the poet comes to be fixed on the unburied body, the first conception is gone, and a different one makes its appearance. Once more, the previously quoted lines of the *Antigone* (1070 f.), where Polyneikes is spoken of as τῶν κάτωθεν θεῶν ἄμοιρος, are contradicted by Antigone's hope (898 f.),

φίλη μὲν ἤξειν πατρὶ, προσφιλὴς δὲ σοί,
 μῆτερ, φίλη δὲ σοί, κασίγνητον κάρα,

if the brother intended here is Polyneikes. Everything points to him rather than Eteokles, except the supposed necessity of harmonizing the words with a Greek belief in the exclusion from Hades of the unburied dead,—a consideration the weakness of which is now sufficiently apparent. Does not, in fact, this whole tragedy bear witness to the feeble hold which the belief in question had on the mind of Sophokles? If the

poet had believed in any vivid way that the admission of Polyneikes's soul to Hades depended on his burial, would he have represented the burial rites as performed a second and a third time? If the first burial carried Polyneikes across Acheron, what happened, one might ask, when the dust was brushed from his body? Was the soul haled back again, and was Charon kept busy through the day in ferrying him back and forth? But such a question is out of place. It was not raised at all by Sophokles nor by his audience. They were quite ready to entertain at any moment the thought that neglect of burial somehow kept the soul from reaching the new home toward which it yearned; but this thought was as far as possible from being an abiding and potent article of belief.

If an objection to this last statement should be based on the custom of putting an obol in the mouth of a corpse to pay the fare demanded by Charon, it might be answered that this custom was not universal (see Schömann, *Griech. Alt.*, ii. p. 567, Anm. 1); but, apart from this, the literary evidence given above is sufficient proof that the interpretation of the custom by those who practised it could not have been clear-cut and authoritative.

But, in spite of all this, the feeling may still linger that the extreme importance attached by the Greeks to burial cannot be accounted for without allowing more weight to the exclusion-idea than I have done. To do justice to this objection would require an extended discussion; nor could the point be adequately treated apart from the development of religious customs generally. Briefly, the theory to which I adhere is, that burial, originating, like lustration, as a sanitary measure, came, like lustration, to be sanctioned by all the authority of immemorial usage and of religion. It was these factors which mainly determined the importance of the rite, though undoubtedly the exclusion-idea, in so far as it prevailed, contributed something in the same direction. With this view of the matter, Greek literature is well in accord. The subject of burial is treated there with remarkable frequency and fullness; as witness, e. g., the Funeral Oration attributed to Lysias, the

Aias and the Antigone of Sophokles, the Supplices of Euripides, and, in a lesser degree, the Seven against Thebes of Aeschylus, the Oedipus at Kolonos of Sophokles, the Phoenissae, the Helena, and the Hecuba of Euripides, not to speak of scattered passages in the historians and elsewhere. All this mass of evidence shows how strong in the Greek mind was the sentiment of the importance of burial ; but it shows also, that in the maintenance of that sentiment the notion of the exclusion of the unburied from Hades had no commanding place. The expression of such a notion, considering the opportunities for it, is extremely rare. For the most part, Greeks accepted the importance of burial, like other matters of religious custom, without question ; and when they did try to account for it, they were generally content to say that both the dead themselves and the infernal gods claimed this ceremony as their due.